



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Stephen J. Murphy  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan**

*Suite 2001  
211 West Fort Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277  
Fax: (313) 226-3561*

**For Immediate Release:**

**Contact:** Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758

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**EVENT: Sentencing**

**Defendant: Stewart Richardson**

**FORMER WHITE LAKE BUSINESS OWNER  
SENTENCED TO 74 MONTHS FOR INTERNET SCAM**

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Stewart Richardson, 65, former owner of Retired Figurines located in White Lake, Michigan was sentenced today to 74 months in prison as a result of his February 2, 2006 guilty plea to one count of mail fraud and one count of wire fraud, announced United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy.

Joined in the announcement was FBI Special Agent in Charge Daniel D. Roberts.

In addition to the prison sentence, Federal District Court Chief Judge Bernard A. Friedman also ordered Richardson to serve three years of supervised release, subject to numerous restrictions, and to pay restitution to his victims. .

According to the information presented to the court at the time of the plea and sentencing hearings, Richardson was the co-owner and operator of a business named Retired Figurines. During the time period December 28, 2001 to January 4, 2002, Richardson conducted an online auction on Ebay and accepted bids on various collectable figurines from

bidders from numerous states. Richardson falsely represented to the bidders that he had the items he was auctioning when in fact he did not have those items and had no intention of ever actually delivering the items. Once the auction was closed, Richardson collected payments from a number of winning bidders and deposited that money into his bank account. Richardson then phoned second and third place bidders and falsely told them that the winning bidder had failed to pay, and so they were now eligible to buy the fictitious items. Richardson would then have these buyers send their money to him as well. In total, Richardson fraudulently obtained over \$300,000.00 from approximately 198 victims.

As the scheme was unwinding, Richardson withdrew all of the victims' money, as well as \$40,000 of equity from his home that he had obtained without his wife's knowledge. Richardson then told his employees he was going out to lunch, and instead drove to Detroit Metro Airport, abandoned his van and fled the state. Among the items left in the van were a Rolex watch box and a brochure describing how to make false identification documents.

A federal criminal complaint was issued in February 2002, however, Richardson remained a fugitive for several years. Richardson was apprehended in California in September, 2005, after telling his then-girlfriend that he was a fugitive, and displaying his "Wanted" poster to prove it. Richardson had also told this girlfriend that he had committed the fraud because his wife had died of cancer, leaving him with tremendous medical bills. In fact, Richardson had left his wife, who had co-owned the Retired Figurines business, and she was faced with Richardson's fraud victims making claims against the company.

United States Attorney Murphy said, "Commercial activity on the internet is largely unregulated, but is nevertheless frequently based upon the trust buyer has for seller. When that trust has been derided and exploited, as it has in this case, it is entirely appropriate for federal criminal prosecution to fill the void. Today's sentence signals my office's decision to apply appropriate resources in an effort to address those criminals who would exploit the trust of innocent buyers on the internet."

U.S. Attorney Murphy thanked the FBI and Assistant United States Attorney Daniel Hurley for their tenacious and diligent efforts in the successful investigation and prosecution of the case.